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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (08/04): Fatah Party Congress Seen  
as Significant Junction in Palestinian Political Situation

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Main Stories:  
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All dailies lead with coverage of the Sixth Fatah Party Congress set to convene in Bethlehem on August 4, highlighting remarks by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas stating that launching the Congress in the homeland is "historic." Al-Quds quotes Marwan Barghouti, a senior Fatah leader currently in an Israeli jail, calling on Congress organizers to hold accountable every member responsible for the downfall of the movement. The dailies also quote Fatah leader Jibril Rajoub saying that the Congress will aim to patch up the internal state of affairs of the movement. Al-Hayat Al-Jadida reports that Nabil Amr has been named the official spokesman of the congress.

Reactions to the evacuation of Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem continue to capture coverage on the front pages of the dailies. All papers spotlight Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's remarks describing the evictions as "deeply regrettable," and "not in keeping with Israeli obligations," while urging Israeli officials to "refrain from such provocative actions." The coverage also includes international condemnations of Israeli actions in East Jerusalem, including by the UN, the EU and several individual European countries, many of which described the evictions as "illegal" and "unacceptable."

The dailies report that the Rafah Crossing at the Egyptian-Gaza border is open for Palestinian travelers for three days starting August 3. In related news, the dailies continue to report on the rising number of Palestinians killed in the smuggling tunnels near those borders, noting that one more Palestinian was killed yesterday and three others were missing.-----

BLOCK QUOTES:

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1) Veteran columnist Hani Masri commented in independent Al-Ayyam under the headline, "Fatah, Where to? A Political Ruling Party or Liberation Movement?" (8/4): "Holding the [Fatah] Congress in occupied Palestine and with the absence of many of its important members from abroad, including one of Fatah's founders Farouq Qaddoumi, is a great loss...The unity of the Fatah movement and that of the Palestinian people can never be achieved without first reestablishing the integrity of the Palestinian national project, which includes the right of return, self determination, and establishing an independent and sovereign Palestinian state on all the land occupied in 1967, including Jerusalem."

2) Independent Al-Quds editorialized in "Challenges Facing Fatah and the Nation" (8/4): "As Fatah convenes its Congress today, the eyes, hearts and ambitions of all Palestinians from inside the homeland and in the Diaspora are all directed toward the participants. Palestinians know very well that the great challenges facing Fatah are the same challenges facing our nation under occupation and facing our people regardless of their political affiliations. This is true because Fatah leads the struggle to regain our rights. Fatah also gets the credit for putting the Palestinian people and its cause on the political map of the Middle East...Fatah is expected today to rise to the occasion to confront the challenges facing the movement and the Palestinians as a whole. It is compelled to reclaim its leadership role in the national effort, especially as we face the current fateful political junction."

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Main Stories:  
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